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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE 1899
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE 1691
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC IMMEDIATE 1119
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000607

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STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR
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STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/27/2018

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SUBJECT: PREVAL NOMINATES CANDIDATE FOR PRIME MINISTER,
NEXT STEP PARLIAMENT

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 447

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Classified By: DCM Thomas C. Tighe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Following weeks of consultations with political parties and the private sector, President Preval nominated Ericq Pierre on April 27 to replace Jacques-Edouard Alexis as Prime Minister. Preval notified the presidents of both houses of parliament April 27 of his choice and will formalize his choice by official letter to both houses April 28. No stranger to Haitian politics, the 63 year-old Pierre, currently the Haitian representative at the Inter-American Development Bank, was previously nominated for the post during Preval's first tenure as President (1996-2001) but failed to receive parliamentary ratification, in part because of doubts about his Haitian citizenship. If parliament approves him and his still-to-be-named cabinet, Pierre faces the difficult task of reestablishing public confidence in the Preval administration at a time of stubbornly persistent food price inflation. A technocrat with no formal political affiliation, but having been close to President Preval for many years, he may have difficulty asserting leadership over his own government, which Preval micro-managed under former PM Alexis. However, we expect Pierre -- an employee in the U.S. Embassy's Economic-Commercial section in the 1970s -- to work well with the U.S. If Pierre and his government are rejected by either house of parliament, the search for a new PM will begin anew. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Following two weeks of consultations with political parties and other influential factions of Haitian society, President Preval on April 27 chose 63 year-old Haiti Representative at the Inter-American Development Bank Ericq Pierre as his nominee for Prime Minister. Pierre succeeds Jacques-Edouard Alexis, whose government fell in a Senate vote of no-confidence April 12. Senate President Kely Bastien informed Poloff April 27 that Preval notified both presidents of the houses of parliament. Both presidents agreed with his choice and Preval will formalize his choice by expediting a letter April 28 to both houses. Upon receipt of Preval's official notification, parliament expects Mr. Pierre to present copies of his grandparents' birth certificates to validate his Haitian citizenship and commence

the ratification process.

¶3. (SBU) No stranger to Haitian politics, Preval nominated Pierre for Prime Minister in 1997 after his first PM, Rosny Smarth, resigned. At that time, the parliament declined to ratify the nomination due to doubts about Pierre's Haitian citizenship and objections from OPL, former PM Smarth's political party. (Note: Parliament requested Pierre provide copies of his grandparents' birth certificates to prove his Haitian "citizenship by origin," which article 11 of Haiti's constitution defines as having at least one parent, and both of that parent's parents, Haitian by origin. Pierre allegedly could not provide a copy of his grandfather's birth certificate and subsequently withdrew from of the ratification process. End note.) He worked with Preval during the latter's 1999 conflict with Parliament, during Preval's campaign for the presidency 2005-2006 and during the transition following Preval's victory. Currently the Haiti Representative at the Inter-American Development Bank, Pierre is a close friend of Preval's. An agronomist by training, Pierre is the founder of the Association of Haitian Agronomists (ANDAH) and has no known political party affiliations.

¶4. (C) Fanmi Lavalas (FL) Deputies Jonas Coffy (West) and Sorel Francois (West) revealed to Poloff April 25 that Ericq Pierre was considered a "technocrat" in Haitian political circles and too far removed from Haitian reality to be an effective unifier. Both anticipated Pierre would have difficulty passing the Chamber of Deputies. They suggested FL elected officials would give any Preval nominee a hard time based on Preval's continued exclusion of FL from the political process and Preval's refusal to consult with FL during the search process for a new Prime Minister. Senate Vice President Andris Riche (OPL, Grand'Anse) told Poloff April 25 that the Lespwa senators would have to vote in favor

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of any candidate Preval nominated. The "Group of 16" (the sixteen senators who censured former Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis) would support the candidate, provided he or she was qualified, had a vision, and was fully engaged.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Under pressure from the international community and the Haitian political class, Preval took just two weeks to nominate a new PM. However, Ericq Pierre must still, in consultation with the President, choose a cabinet, and then present his government and its program to the parliament for a vote of confidence. Piecing together a government broadly representative of Haiti's main political parties will be a process every bit as laborious as finding the new PM. The more politically inclusive that government, the better will be its chance of parliamentary approval. If Pierre's government fails to win that approval, the selection process begins anew. On May 8 (or when the electoral law passes, whichever happens first) the Senate will lose 9 members whose two-year terms expire. (The tenth two-year Senator, Ultimo Compere, was expelled March 18 for having dual citizenship, reftel.) It is not clear how the rump Senate's changed composition will affect Pierre's ratification chances.

¶6. (C) Comment continued: As Prime Minister, Pierre will face the difficult task of reestablishing government credibility at a time of continuing food price inflation. As a technocrat very close to President Preval, he will have his work cut out for him in asserting control over his own government. He will face attempts by President Preval to micro-manage ministries, as occurred under the tenure of ex-PM Alexis. He may also have trouble supervising ministers from multiple political parties reluctant to work with an "outsider" who has lived abroad so long. His international economic experience and previous contacts with this Embassy, however, lead us to believe he will be a well-disposed interlocutor with the U.S.

SANDERSON